

# COLLEGE AND CAREER READY STANDARDS

*What do the Standards Mean  
for Children with the Most  
Significant Cognitive  
Disabilities?*

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In collaboration with

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**NOTE:** "The terms "college and career ready" and "college and career readiness" are used interchangeably throughout this document and in other publications."

*This booklet is designed to provide information about College and Career Readiness Standards\* and what students are expected to learn. With this information, parents will be able to help support their child to be college and career ready upon graduation from high school.*

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## **Learning Opportunities Aligned to College and Career Readiness Standards**

Current laws, reforms, and educational practices continue to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning for all students, including students with disabilities. These education improvement efforts include five main ideas:

- High expectations for all students
- Measuring academic achievement for all students
- Access to grade level content
- Decision making one child at a time
- All students included in school accountability

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are expected to participate in lessons based on the same academic standards as their grade-level peers. This academic content is age appropriate, motivating and challenging for all students. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may learn the same content in different ways.

<http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/elastandards/>

<http://www.azed.gov/azcommoncore/mathstandards/>

# Overview of Standards

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An important part of the changes in education today are standards leading to College and Career Readiness and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. These standards are the result of years of previous reform to improve educational opportunities for all children. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have resulted in students with disabilities receiving better academic instruction, and showing increased academic achievement. These education acts include requirements for free appropriate public education and provide methods for tracking a school's progress and accountability. These laws describe specialized education and related services to meet the special needs of all students with disabilities so they are prepared for further education, employment and independent living. The United States Department of Education is using these laws to guide them in making changes to the ESEA. The Department of Education's recommendation is to include College and Career Readiness Standards for *all* students, and reliable and high quality assessments of student progress in meeting these standards.

The ESEA currently requires states to either change existing standards or work with other states to create common standards. These standards should clearly define the knowledge and skills students should have during their K-12 education so that they may graduate from high school ready for success in college courses and/or workforce training programs. Forty-eight states and territories have adopted a common set of standards called the Common Core State Standards. Teachers, administrators and curriculum content experts gathered from across states to create this set of College and Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. The state revised standards or the Common Core State Standards will continue to provide a shared focus across states and better matched assessment systems to measure academic achievement and, ultimately, college and career readiness.

# State Assessments Aligned to College and Career Readiness Standards

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State assessment systems or tests measure how students are making progress toward the academic standards adopted by their state. All students must participate in state assessments. The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team uses state participation guidelines to decide how each student will participate in state assessment system. The current Alternate Assessment Eligibility form can be accessed at the following links: <http://www.azed.gov/assessment/ncsc/> or <http://www.azed.gov/assessment/aims-a/> under the Eligibility tab.

The Alternate Assessment is designed and intended for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This test allows students to show what knowledge and skills they have learned as defined in state standards. Schools are held responsible for student achievement. The Alternate Assessment provides a way to measure students, whose disability would otherwise prevent them from showing what they know and can do on the general state assessment, even with accommodations. These results provide meaningful information to parents and educators.

State assessments are now being developed to measure College and Career Readiness Standards. These new assessments, both the general assessment and the alternate assessment, will be administered by the 2014 – 2015 school year.

# Frequently Asked Questions

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**1. Why were new standards developed?**

The standards were developed to provide clear, consistent messages of what students are expected to be able to learn and do. They help teachers and parents better understand what ALL students need to know and be able to do to be successful in our 21st century global communities.

**2. How are new standards going to impact students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**

These new standards promote higher expectations for all students with the intention of providing improved instruction leading to more opportunities or choices upon graduation.

**3. How will the changes be meaningful to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**

These standards are meant to re-focus instruction on academic skills, resulting in expanded opportunities for young people to be more successful post-graduation.

**4. Do special education students need to take statewide assessments?**

Yes.

**5. Will students with the most significant cognitive disabilities be assessed with new state standards?**

Yes.

**6. Who are the students participating in statewide alternate assessments?**

More information on the current AIMS A eligibility can be accessed at:

<http://www.azed.gov/assessment/ncsc/> or <http://www.azed.gov/assessment/aims-a/> under the Eligibility tab.

**7. Do all students receive instruction in grade-level academic content?**

For students with significant cognitive disabilities, instruction will be linked to grade-level standards, but may be less complex and narrowed in scope. In addition to grade-level academic content, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may be receiving instruction in social, communication, and functional skills.

**8. What does grade-level instruction look like for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities?**

Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may receive repeated, focused instruction in smaller steps in order use skills independently in many settings. Academic instruction should be individualized and based on student need as indicated in the student's IEP.

**9. What opportunities will students with the most significant cognitive disabilities have related to College and Career Readiness?**

Additional information regarding college opportunities for students with significant cognitive disabilities can be accessed at: <http://www.thinkcollege.net/>

**10. When will the new assessments be available for administration?**

Arizona is a Tier I member of the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) alternate assessment consortia. The new alternate assessments will be administered during the 2014-2015 school year. <http://www.ncscpartners.org/>

# Glossary and Resources

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## [Academic Content Standards<sup>1</sup>](#)

One type of standard that includes statements of the subject-specific knowledge and skills schools are expected to teach students at each grade level, indicating what students should know and be able to do.

## [Accountability/Adequate Yearly Progress \(AYP\)<sup>2</sup>](#)

AYP is part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) requiring elementary schools, secondary schools, and local education agencies (LEA) to meet the state's student academic achievement standards while narrowing the achievement gaps among groups of students, schools, and local education agencies. The definition of AYP must include separate measurable objectives for steady improvement for all students, and for all specified subgroups of students and provide a timeline ensuring that no later than 2014 all students will meet or exceed that state's proficient level of academic achievement on the state assessments. The reporting of student and group proficiency must be shown to be valid and reliable.

**Achievement gap** refers to the observed and persistent difference on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, and/or status.

## [Alternate Achievement Standards<sup>3</sup>](#)

Assessments measuring the grade-level content with less depth, breadth, and difficulty than the regular assessment, and with a different definition of how well and how much students know and do in the content to be considered proficient. States must define alternate achievement standards using a documented and validated standard-setting process reflecting an appropriate high expectation that will yield increased achievement.

## [Alternate Assessment<sup>4</sup>](#)

A test used to gather information on the standards-based performance and progress of students whose disabilities prevent their valid and reliable participation in general assessments. Alternate assessments measure the performance of a relatively small population of students (generally about 1% of the tested population nationally) who are unable to participate in the general assessment system, with or without accommodations as determined by the student's Individual Education Program (IEP) team using the state's participation guidelines.

## [Assessment Accommodations<sup>5</sup>](#)

Accommodations are tools and procedures in presentation, response, setting and timing/scheduling that provides equal instructional and assessment access for all eligible students. Accommodations reduce or eliminate the effects of a student's disability and do not reduce learning expectations. Without accommodations, students with disabilities may not be able to access grade level instruction and participate fully on assessments. These assessment accommodations must be identified in the student's IEP or Section 504 plan. It is considered



best practice for assessment accommodations to have been used regularly during instruction and classroom assessment.

- **Standard Accommodations**

These are accommodations that are in general use in most testing programs and that do not reduce the learning expectations for the targeted skills.

- **Non-standard Accommodations/Modifications**

Non-standard accommodations also referred to as modifications, change, lower or reduce learning expectations or targeted skills tested and may negatively impact a student's overall educational outcome.

### College and Career Readiness<sup>6</sup>

Students are considered college and career ready when they have the knowledge, skills, and academic preparation needed to enroll and succeed in beginning college credit-bearing courses within a two year associate or four year baccalaureate degree program without the need for remediation. These same skills and levels of achievement are needed for entry into and success in additional education following high school or when entering into a job that offers gainful employment and career advancement.

### Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)<sup>7</sup>

This is the principal federal law affecting K-12 education. When the ESEA of 1965 was reauthorized and amended in 2002, it was named the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

### Individualized Education Program (IEP)<sup>8</sup>

A written document for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised to show the decisions made by an interdisciplinary team, including the parent and the student... An IEP for a student includes such things as, instructional, placement, and assessment decisions.

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)<sup>9</sup>

Federal law originally enacted by Congress in 1975, reauthorized in 2004, is designed to ensure that all children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. The Office of Special Education programs (OSEP) has defined 20 indicators to guide State education agencies in implementation and progress reporting on IDEA compliance.

### No Child Left Behind ACT of 2001 (NCLB)<sup>10</sup>

Federal law passed by Congress in 2001. It is a major reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). It redefines the federal role in supporting the closing of the achievement gap. It includes the requirement for states to administer tests each year that are aligned to state academic content standards in reading, math and science for all students in grades 3-8 and at least once in grades 9-12.

## **Think College**<sup>11</sup>

Think College was created by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. ICI has been a leader in the area of postsecondary education for people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities for over ten years. As interest in postsecondary education for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities has grown, so has the need for research and training in this area. ICI now has three federal grants designed to do research, training, and provide technical assistance for professionals, families, and students related to postsecondary education for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Think College focuses on three primary areas in postsecondary education for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities: Research, training and technical assistance, and sharing information.

## **U.S. Department of Education A Blueprint for Reform the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act**<sup>12</sup>

## **U.S. Department of Education College and Career Ready Standards and Assessments**<sup>13</sup>

## **U.S. Department of Education Learning Opportunities for your Child through Alternate Assessments**<sup>14</sup>

**More information and updates can be accessed at the Arizona Department of Education Alternate Assessment web page.**

FOR NCSC: <http://www.azed.gov/assessment/ncsc/> or  
FOR AIMS A: <http://www.azed.gov/assessment/aims-a/>

Other helpful websites:

1. [www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/Standards/StandardsTopic.htm](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/Standards/StandardsTopic.htm)
2. [http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2006/Assessing\\_Students\\_with\\_Disabilities\\_Glossary\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2006/Assessing_Students_with_Disabilities_Glossary_2006.pdf)
3. [http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/AlternateAssessments/aa\\_aas.htm](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/AlternateAssessments/aa_aas.htm)
4. [http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2006/Assessing\\_Students\\_with\\_Disabilities\\_Glossary\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2006/Assessing_Students_with_Disabilities_Glossary_2006.pdf)
5. <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/onlinepubs/NCLD/Accommodations.pdf>
6. <http://www.fl DOE.org/cc/collegcareerreadiness.asp>
7. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>
8. [http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2006/Assessing\\_Students\\_with\\_Disabilities\\_Glossary\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2006/Assessing_Students_with_Disabilities_Glossary_2006.pdf)

9. <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/OnlinePubs/NCEOAcronymHandbook.pdf>
10. <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>
11. <http://www.thinkcollege.net/>
12. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/blueprint.pdf>
13. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/faq/college-career.pdf>
14. <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/learning/index.html>